

APPENDIX E: THE ORAL CAVITY

The oral cavity is described in detail to assist in identifying the location of hooks, and especially to distinguish hooks that are swallowed from those lodged in the oral cavity. Do not attempt to remove hooks when it appears hook removal will cause further serious injury to the turtle. See Appendix F for detailed hook removal guidelines. A number of mouth openers and mouth gags are listed and described along with dehooking devices including pliers and bolt cutters.

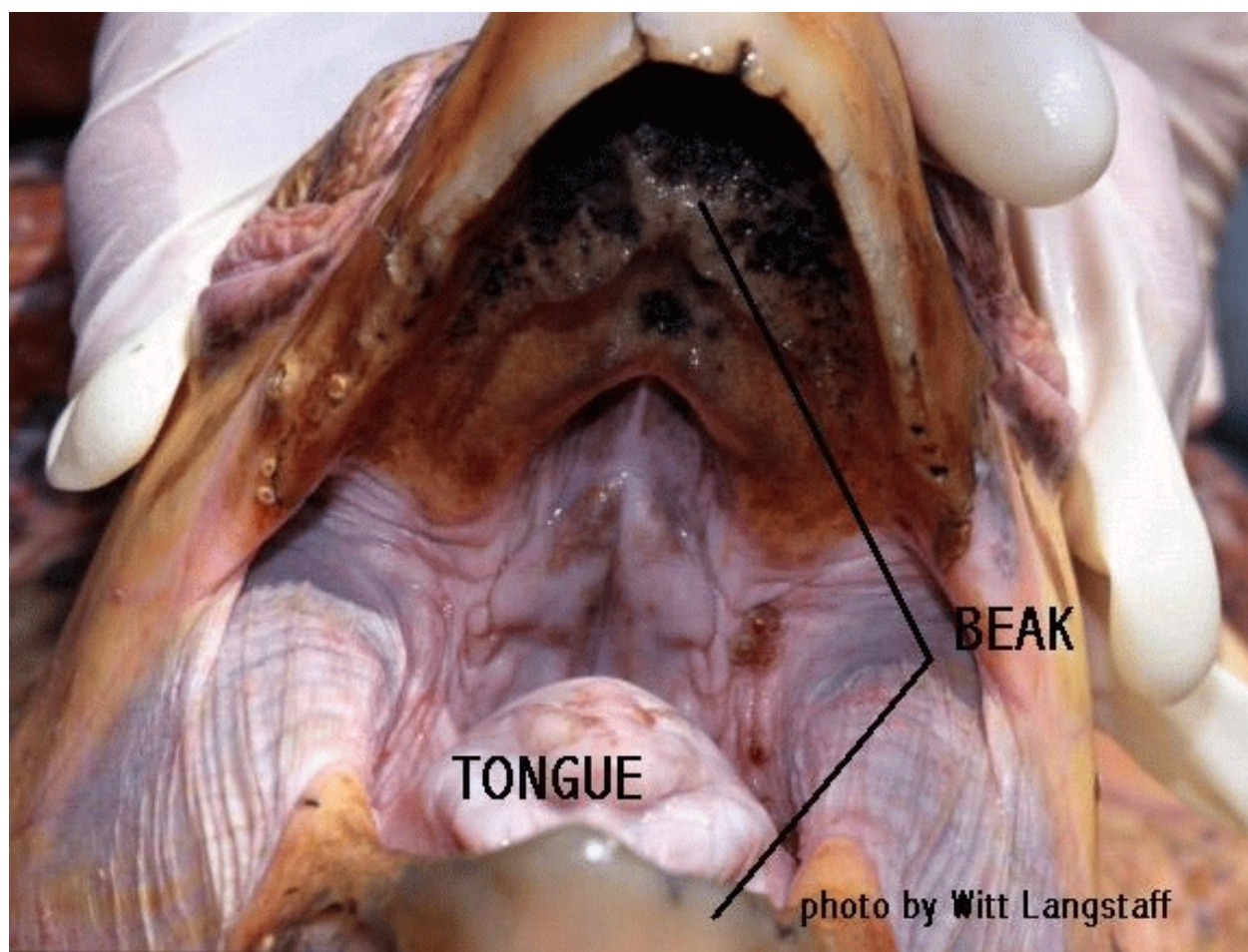


Figure 1. The beaks, rhamphotheci, of the upper and lower jaws of hardshell sea turtles are keratinized and cover many of the bones of the upper jaw and dentary of the lower jaw. They differ among species and can be used for identification.

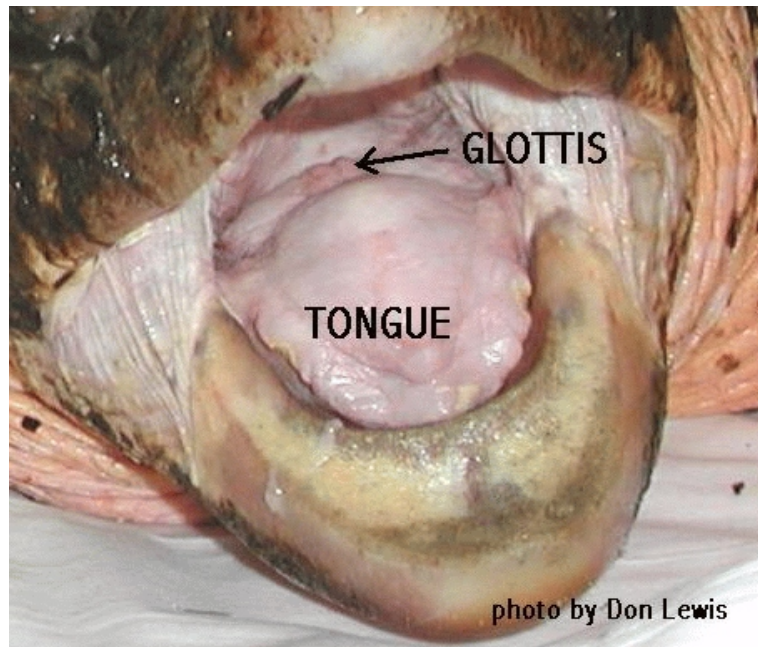
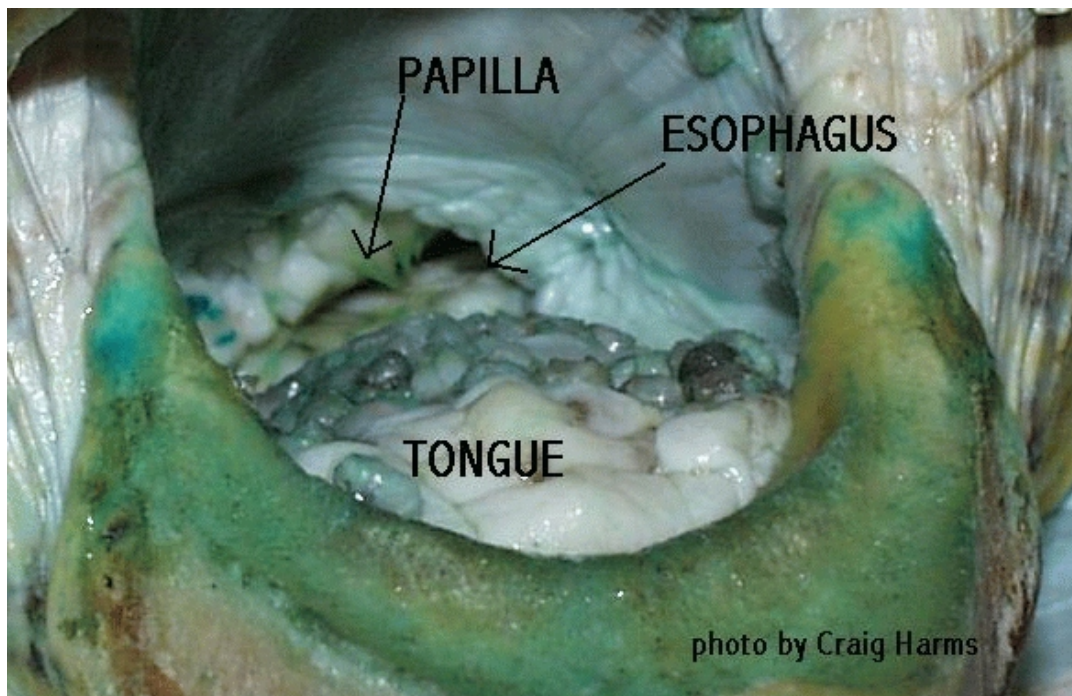
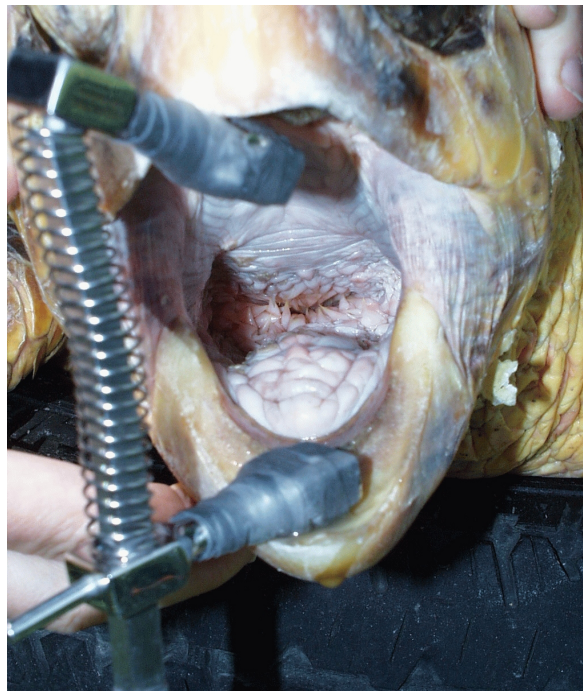


Figure 2. The tongue is a large muscular organ fixed to the floor of the mouth and is not protrusible. The glottis, the opening to the trachea and the valve to open and close the airway, is located on the middle part of the tongue. The glottis is closed in the top picture (photo by Don Lewis) and open in the bottom picture (photo by Craig Harms).





Figures 3a and 3b. The esophagus links the oral cavity to the stomach. It starts at the back of the mouth, behind the tongue. For most of the length of the esophagus, it is lined with papillae that are keratinized. They are sharp and point towards the stomach and are presumed to trap food, preventing it from working its way back up when excess water is expelled. (photos by Craig Harms)



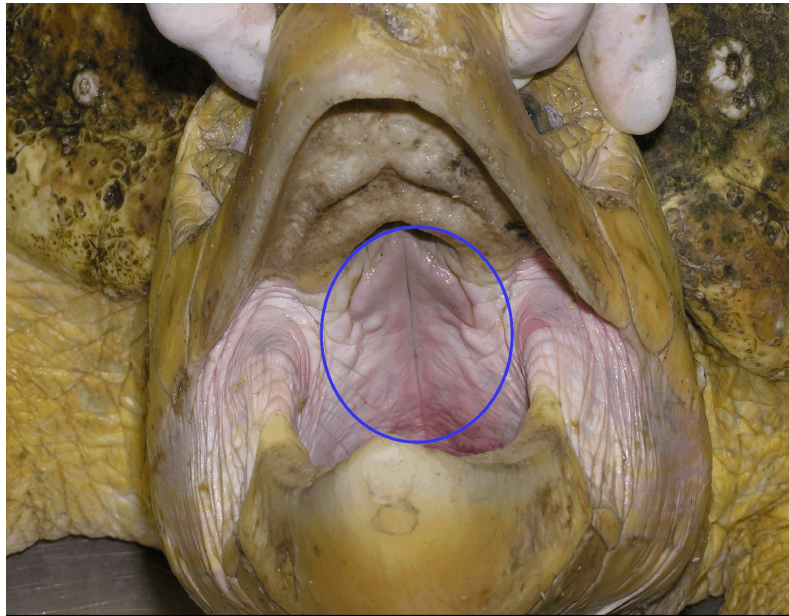


Figure 4. Ventral view of the soft palate, upper jaw. The palate is ventral to the braincase.



Figure 5a. External view of jaw joint location indicated by the pointer.



Figure 5b. Internal view of jaw joint location, side of the mouth.